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THE REVIEW IN MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Everybody, even the inexperienced teacher, concedes that the review is an integral part of all instruction and should occupy an important place in the recitation. But how to review is a question which can be answered in many ways, none of which is wholly wrong, none of which is the best way. It is simply a matter of selecting that method which is best suited to the class, to the teacher, to the subject, to circumstances.

The subject of review in modern language teaching naturally divides itself into four parts, viz., review (1) of vocabulary; (2) of form; (3) of syntax; (4) of the thought contained in the reading matter. Although all of these are to some extent interdependent and overlap each other, I shall consider them separately.

The first thing begun in the modern language course is the vocabulary, and it engrosses our attention to the very last lesson. The study of language is primarily a great and glorious study of words. Not only must we give the pupil words and explain them to him, but we must force him to use them until they become a part of himself. To accomplish this, there should be a backward look over the words both of former lessons and of those just given. The question and answer method of going over the old vocabulary is good, particularly for nouns, if used for short periods of time and presented in an interesting way. All questions for this purpose should be prepared previously and it is well to write them out. Another scheme is to employ some game in which all the pupils have a chance; one pupil may give the initial letter of a word and the others guess the word; or he may give a characteristic quality of some object, while the others try to guess the name of the object. Arranging nouns in groups, whether according to meaning, situation of objects, or synonyms and antonyms, proves both interesting and valuable. It is very interesting for beginners to group words according to vowels. The grouping method is a natural way of remembering; it is one by which the child learns his mother tongue. In reviewing adjectives the "how" type of question is good, when applied to names of objects which have been taught before. This can also be done with adverbs by applying the questions to actions

performed by the teacher or pupils, but it must be done skilfully and sparingly to avoid monotony and consequent inattention. For verbs a pupil may perform some action before the class and call upon different individuals to tell what he is doing. The grouping method for teaching and reviewing verbs was long ago suggested by Gouin, and has the advantage of teaching naturally and rapidly and therefore interestingly. Pronouns and verbs can be reviewed together, though, of course, only one can be drilled at one time. Placing objects or pupils in various positions, as well as the use of pictures serve for a re-survey of prepositions, also to drill on the cases which they govern. The old pastime of writing down a long word from which other shorter words are formed, might do to vary the work at times. Or let the teacher write some suggestive word on the board and ask the pupils to give as many words as they can recall, which are related to it, in other words, let them group by association. It is better, however, to follow such exercises by using the words in sentences, in order that it may not degenerate into a simple listing of words. The game 'Peter Coddles' has interested and entertained many youngsters. How would it be for the teacher or some pupil to read aloud a narrative with blanks into which suitable words can be fitted when the reader pauses? Of course one must insist on words which develop a sensible narrative, if the exercise is to be of any value. In all of these exercises it is better to let individual pupils lead in turn. Thus you get more pupil activity, and the teacher's voice is rested at the same time.

When we turn to the second point, drilling forms, however, the pupils cannot lead so readily and must be followed more carefully by the teacher. Here again the question and answer method is of service. It is always advisable to set up one or several models of the forms in hand, written or oral. To develop and drill verb forms this is the most desirable way. It demands more thinking on the part of the pupil. For noun forms a good exercise is to let different pupils take turns at using the different cases and numbers of given nouns in original sentences. This can also be applied to the comparison of adjectives. The declension of adjectives in German offers difficulties and should be brought up constantly for drill. A simple type of work might consist of a conversation between pupils. As previously suggested, models should always be present; particularly whenever the pupils carry on the work

among themselves. When the teacher leads, his sentences are the model, otherwise a model should be written on the board, or repeated a number of times at the beginning of the exercise. In this kind of exercise the *welcher*, *was für*, and *was für ein* type of question can be utilized to advantage. By careful questioning the teacher can obtain answers containing *adjectives* in the different cases. Pronouns permit little variety in exercises. The personal and reflexive pronouns can be reviewed in connection with the verb; there is greater difficulty with the others, and the question and answer exercise is about all that can be employed. In general, free composition of the simplest kind is very good.

Perhaps the most difficult of all to review is the third division, syntax, as such. It is easy to treat it incidentally in connection with other phases of the work, but to teach it separately requires skill and ingenuity. It seems to me one good way is to have the class give translations or original sentences illustrating some given point, and from these examples to re-formulate the rule. Let the rule be a matter of minor importance, and the illustrations, the all important thing. Instead of requiring examples from the class, the teacher might choose some from the works of literary artists. Although it would require much time, it would serve, I think, to re-establish the old rule and to fix it more strongly, for the fact that you are considering the works of men who are recognized as authorities makes it more impressive. A good plan is for the teacher to write a synopsis in the foreign language and translate it into the mother tongue. Have the pupils read the paraphrase in German and then ask them to re-translate the English translation of the original paraphrase back into German. May I repeat, in all work of this kind, the one thing to do is to produce the impression that the language itself and not the rule is the alpha and omega upon which the grammar is built.

Although much time is required for reviewing and drilling the vocabulary, forms, and syntax, the fourth point, the thought of the reading matter, should not be neglected. The habit of reading without getting the thought should be discouraged from the very first lesson. If the pupil knows that there will be a recapitulation of the thought at subsequent recitations, he will be more apt to make an effort so assimilate the thought material. How can we do this successfully? Questions and answers will

hardly solve the problem here—they are too monotonous. A brief retelling of the narrative in the foreign language often serves not only to review past work, but also to clarify the passage in hand. This forces the pupil to free composition, a valuable exercise mentioned above. A quick way of covering the ground is a rapid “quiz” in the mother tongue. If there is time, a dramatization of some portion of the work already covered arouses interest in old material. This might be done outside of the class either as home work or better still in the German club. Whatever way is chosen, the aim must be to present the old material in a new way.

We have considered the how, let us not neglect the when and the where. The first of these is easily disposed of. One word suffices—always. By that I mean that from the first lesson to the last, there should be some review work in every lesson. That does not necessarily mean that half of the period should be spent in this kind of work each day; a comparatively short period of time thus spent suffices. It serves to put the pupils into the proper attitude, it “warms them up” as we say. In this way, i. e. by beginning with review work, you proceed from the easy, easy, because it is old, to the more difficult, the new material. To be sure the review should not be limited to the early years, but should extend throughout the entire course. During which particular part of the recitation—first, middle, or last—is the best place, is a matter of personal taste. I like a short period at the beginning to catch up the broken threads of the preceding lesson and connect them with the lesson in hand, and another even shorter period just before the close, when the advance work can be given in a nutshell to be taken along, and brought back and cracked the following day. All these details, however, are of minor importance; in whatever way, shape, or manner the dose is administered, let it be given above all systematically. Review work should be planned as thoroughly and deliberately, and given as regularly as any of the advance work.

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